



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA (MP), MINISTER OF HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES ON THE OCCASION OF A PRESS BRIEFING ON
CONFIRMATION OF COVID-19 IN NAMIBIA**

14 MARCH 2020

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

1. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media! When we met last time, I informed you that we will invite you to share with you and the public at large new development as far as COVID-19 is concerned. I thank you for responding to our invitation this morning albeit on a short notice.
2. The COVID-19 outbreak has been spreading around the world since its announcement in the City of Wuhan, in Hubei Province in China. With a sober heart, I must announce this morning that COVID-19 has reached our country. The positive COVID-19 results were received last night, on Friday, the 13th March 2020 at around 21:00. The tests were conducted on two travellers who came to Namibia from Spain. The travellers, who are a couple, started their journey from Madrid, Spain, via Doha, Qatar and arrived in Windhoek on Wednesday, the 11th March 2020.
3. On arrival at Hosea Kutako International Airport, the couple were screened like all other passengers and also completed travel declarations as is procedure. The screening procedure did not reveal any signs to cause concern, such as high fever.
4. Later on the same day, one of the couple presented to a private medical practice with complaints of a cough. The attending medical doctor, taking into account, the travel history of the individual determined that samples should be taken for confirmatory test of COVID-19. The specimen were sent to a private laboratory, which in turn sent them for testing in South Africa. As I stated earlier, the test results were received from South Africa yesterday night. Thus, I hereby announce that there are two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Namibia.
5. The couple to who the positive results relate were immediately quarantined and contact tracing commenced. This will be intensified to ensure that all contacts are traced in order to protect the Namibian public and prevent community transmission.
6. This development demands extra-ordinary action by Government. It calls for greater unity of purpose and actions by all of us as Namibians. The government shall introduce additional measures in the COVID-19 response. These measures will be announced as soon as they are finalised.
7. The World Health Organization, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have provided guidelines on response to the outbreak. These guidelines have guided Namibia's response to date. It is in the same spirit that these new measures are being contemplated.
8. The Ministry wishes to remind travellers that health screenings are mandatory, and a health declaration is to be completed upon arrival at all Namibian Points of Entry. The declaration allows health authorities to contact travellers and their contacts, should the need arise to do so. No incidences of Covid-19 are confirmed at this stage within the borders of the Republic of Namibia.
9. The Ministry reminds all persons within our borders (Namibians and travellers alike) to be extra vigilant and practice hygiene diligently. This is paramount and it is vital to protect our people and prevent further spread of the disease. Thus, it is strongly recommended to practice good personal basic hygiene, and specifically to always:
 - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.
10. All official and authenticated information about the COVID-19 outbreak are to be and will be communicated through the Ministry of Health and Social Services to ensure the nation is adequately and correctly informed. The public is thus advised to cease and desist from distributing unverified information that have the potential to cause public panic, alarm and consternation.
 11. I call on private service providers to join us in the fight against COVID-19. All suspected cases must be reported to the Ministry and all results, positive or negative must be communicated to the Ministry immediately upon their receipt. I am encouraged by the fact that some private service providers have approached the Ministry and offered their service. This is really a welcome development.
 12. I call on the public to remain calm and to practise preventive measures. I further call on the public to respect the privacy of the couple concerned.
 13. I wish to emphasise and appeal to all Namibians that to combat the further spread of this disease, we must rally together and confront this threat as One Namibia and One Nation. It is in our best interest to stand in unison for the wellbeing of our people and our country.

I thank you.